

I wish them good health and happiness as they move forward in their lives.

DOLLARS TO THE CLASSROOM ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 18, 1998

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 3248) to provide Dollars to the Classroom:

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Madam Chairman, we have been charged by our constituents to construct and introduce wise legislation, yet today we are considering legislation which will severely hamper our Nation's efforts to improve our children's education. The Dollars to the Classroom Act is riddled with faults, such as providing no mechanism for accountability of Federal funds as well as funding general operating expenses rather than national educational priorities.

One of the major setbacks of this legislation is that it does not ensure that Federal education funds will reach our neediest students. The discretion will be left to the States, which in general have resulted in less targeted fund distribution when compared to Federal programs. In addition, past experience has proven that the consolidation of Federal programs into block grants has resulted in decreased appropriations for varied reasons, such as the lack of distinct Federal priorities and the lack of accountability language.

I am a parent and educator and I know that certain improvements can be made with our American educational system; but H.R. 3248 is not one of these improvements. If education is one of our top priorities in Congress, then we should not pass H.R. 3248. I urge my colleagues to vote no on this legislation.

ESTABLISH YOUTH SUICIDE AS A COMPELLING NATIONAL PRIORITY

HON. RON PACKARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 23, 1998

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge support for a resolution I introduced last week that is of fundamental importance to every person who has ever had children and to every family that has suffered the loss of a loved one through suicide.

During this summer, while I was home in my district, I had the opportunity to meet my constituent Lisa Dove, the mother of Justin Dove who tragically committed suicide at age 16. Justin was a well liked child who lived with clinical depression and Attention Deficit Disorder. Despite several years of medical psychological treatments and antidepressant medications, Justin decided to take his own life.

The purpose of this bill would be to recognize the week of September 20–26, 1998, as Yellow Ribbon Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Week. This bill would also recognize that there is a need to increase aware-

ness about youth suicide and make it a national priority. Finally, this legislation also encourages communities nationwide to increase awareness about and prevent youth suicide.

I would like to thank my original co-sponsor of this bill, the Honorable David Skaggs of Colorado. I would also like to recognize the Light For Life Foundation of America and their founders, the Emme family, who tragically lost their teenage son, Michael to suicide in 1994. It was through the vision of the Emme family that the Yellow Ribbon Program, which is now responsible for saving over 1,000 teenage lives since its inception, has become a reality.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this resolution will increase awareness and help reduce the number of teenage suicides.

THE VETERANS PERSONAL SECURITY ACT

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 23, 1998

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Veterans Personal Security Act. This bill is the direct result of several incidents at the Lyons VA Medical Center in my district.

In late May, a Korean War Veteran who was a psychiatric patient at Lyons walked away from his ward, unnoticed. Several hours later, when he was discovered missing, the VA police began to search the medical center's extensive campus. That search, however, was called off, allegedly because the VA could not pay police overtime to continue. Two days later, the patient was found dead in a ditch adjacent to the main administration building. This veteran's death, and the lack of a proper search, is an atrocity.

In that incident, the VA did notify the local Bernards Township Police Department, but a coordinated search was not requested. I also understand that Lyons VA medical center has had a series of alleged rapes reportedly occur on its campus. These incidents have not been reported to local law enforcement agencies, and as a result, rumors have been circulating among veterans, as well as the local community, about what has actually happened at the medical center. Is there a threat to the safety and security of the community at large? One local police chief said that knowing the facts of these incidents will help him answer questions posed by his community, and hopefully help him ease their concerns that these crimes will spread beyond the medical center's boundaries.

The Veterans Personal Security Act would require the VA police to immediately notify local law enforcement agencies if a serious crime or similar incident occurs. That notification must be followed up within 48 hours with a more detailed, written notification. The VA would be required to notify local police if one of several crimes or alleged incidents occurs, including: a missing patient, the abuse or beating of a patient or staff member, the use or distribution of illegal drugs by a patient or staff member or an alleged rape or any other felony.

Additionally, the Veterans Personal Security Act would grant local law enforcement agencies jurisdiction to go onto VA property to in-

vestigate these crimes, or to help VA police search for missing persons, or provide whatever assistance is needed to resolve these incidents.

I recognize that many local law enforcement agencies are kept busy meeting the demands of their communities. However, it is oftentimes in the local communities' best interests that these situations are brought to their attention and that the police are made aware of them. The veterans who are treated at these facilities, the staff who work there, and the residents in the surrounding communities deserve to know when a crime or other alleged incident occurs. More importantly, they deserve to be protected. Their safety and security must not be compromised by weak links in communication between VA police and the local law enforcement officials.

Mr. Speaker, a veteran should not just "disappear" from a VA medical center, like the tragic incident at Lyons. When a veteran checks into a VA hospital anywhere in America, he or she expects and deserves peace of mind. The Veterans Personal Security Act should ensure that veterans seeking treatment at VA medical facilities will be protected from further harm.

SISTERLY LOVE

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 23, 1998

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, as all of us know, family is the center of American life and I want to share with my colleagues an article which exemplifies the strong family ties found among our healthiest and happiest of families. The article was written by Courtney Toft about her sister, Nicole, who has Rett syndrome. The affection and devotion with which she writes permeates each word and demonstrates the unconditional love both girls have for one another. The close relationship between Courtney and Nicole is a direct reflection of the family life created by their mother, Carol Toft, who works in my District Office in Lake Villa, Illinois. Knowing of Carol's commitment and love for her family, my heart was touched by Courtney's comments about her sister and I simply wanted my colleagues to have an opportunity to read her article as it appeared in the September 1998 issue of the Rett Syndrome Association of Illinois Newsletter.

SISTERHOOD

(By Courtney Toft (age 16))

My sister, Nicole, turned nineteen on August 3. Her personality has changed throughout the years, but she has always kept the sparkling eyes and the smile that lights up the room. People always say, "I think she understands!" I know she understands! She knows so much more than we give her credit for. She is just like every single one of us except she can't express her feelings in words like the rest of us can. Having a sister with Rett syndrome has taught me so much. If Nicole had been "normal" our family would have had a different outlook on life.

Nicole has always been there for me. She listens to my deepest secrets and doesn't tell a soul. She laughs at all my jokes even if they are not funny and basically puts up with all my annoying habits. Of course, Nicole has her bad habits that the rest of the